

Diversions

Friday, December 24, 2010 SECTION B

'True Grit' remake a flawlessly executed Western in the grand tradition **B4**



'Swan' film a window into its director's mind

Black Swan," the latest piece from director Darren Aronofsky, finds Natalie Portman as Nina Sayers, a naive ballet dancer with a single-minded obsession of perfection.

So strong is her passion for dancing that it's stunted her development as a human being. Her bedroom hasn't

FROM OUR BLOGS



Nick DeCicco
For those about to rock

evolved beyond her 'tween years and it's suggested that her romantic interludes are few, if any.

Nina works diligently to become the best dancer in the company. Once that's achieved, her aim of being Swan Queen enough to please the director and herself takes chilling hold.

Nina also continues a pattern of leading men and ladies in Aronofsky's pictures. They're often losing their grip on reality and succumbing to their greatest temptations.

In Aronofsky's "The Wrestler," for example, Mickey Rourke's Randy "The Ram" Robinson is 20 years past his prime and his body is begging him to quit. Even with the suddenly reciprocated feelings of a dancer he pursues, he finds himself accepting a match that could be his last.

Aronofsky's films -- "Wrestler," "Black Swan," "Requiem for a Dream," "Pi" and "The Fountain" -- are almost collectively an exploration of the psyche of an individual whose aspirations or demons outrun them.

There's no simple connect-the-dots, but it does make me wonder if there is something in Aronofsky's life that he deems a great, irresistible pursuit -- and if he fears the control the passion for it exerts over him.

It's idle speculation, but it's not the only example of its kind.

After writing for "The Sopranos" and creating "Mad Men," one wonders aloud if Matthew Weiner gravitates toward projects where the main character struggles with identity issues or if it's a question that gnaws at Weiner himself.

Spike Lee has made many films examining racial tensions. Lee's films speak with the knowledge and history of a person who was raised in a place as culturally and racially diverse as New York City --

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THIS WEEK

See the Entertainment Calendar on page B2 for complete listings.

Fairfield

4 to 6 p.m. and 7 to 11 p.m. today, 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Saturday and Sunday

Bev Orlando Memorial Crèche Exhibit

Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Church, 2700 Dover Ave. Free. 429-0149.

2011

Urban Bushmen ring in new year in Suisun City

BY TONY WADE
DAILY REPUBLIC CORRESPONDENT

The Urban Bushmen Band will help ring in 2011 with its high energy blend of old school and neo R&B at Dimitri's Lounge by the Bay. The event will celebrate the coming of the

new year and the one-year anniversary of the waterfront club as well.

The success of the regionally popular cover band has much to do with how it started, Urban Bushmen keyboard player Christian Houston said.

"All of us were friends first," he said. "We would show up at a house and invite a whole bunch of musicians over and have jam sessions.

"We were all friends 10 to 15 years before we were a band. We're pretty humble cats and it's nice to be in a band where people's egos aren't so inflated that they can't get their heads in the door."

The group was started by lead guitarist and vocalist Kenny Wilson, who is the father of Gabi Wilson, a young local singer who is getting some national attention. It was founded as a blues band, but when Houston was tapped to join, its members changed to an R&B group. While Houston loved the idea of being in a band with his friends, he wasn't so

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Benefit concert brings big names to Bay Area

BY TONY WADE
DAILY REPUBLIC CORRESPONDENT

Q SANTA CLARA — East Bay rockers Y&T are hosting a star-studded New Year's Eve show at the Avalon Ballroom for a cause near and dear to its members' hearts.

The group's longtime bassist Phil Kenmore was diagnosed with Stage IV lung cancer earlier this year and all the proceeds from the event will go to help defray his medical costs.

Y&T has sold 4 million albums worldwide. Its hits include "Forever," "Mean

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'Gulliver's Travels' an innocent family adventure

BY ROGER EBERT
UNIVERSAL UCLICK

I want to tread carefully here, and not because I might step on a Lilliputian and squish him. I want to explain who "Gulliver's Travels" is for, and who it might not be for. One person it is definitely for is

MOVIE Review

"Gulliver's Travels"

Rated PG

85 minutes

★★★ (OUT OF FOUR)

spending \$96 to take four generations of her family to see "The Nutcracker in 3D." She wrote: "It broke my heart when we left the theater that my little great-granddaughters (5-13) had sad little, confused faces." Believe me, Auntie Glo, there would have been smiles on those faces after this movie.



Jack Black stars as Lemuel Gulliver in 20th Century Fox's "Gulliver's Travels," which opens Saturday.

The Associated Press

On the other hand, this is not really a movie for Jack Black fans -- not of the Jack Black of "School of Rock," for sure. They're used to seeing Jack with his shirt off, but to see their bad boy getting tiny cannon balls embedded in his belly may not be what they have in mind, not even when he sticks out

his gut and the cannon balls pop out again and demolish an enemy armada.

He is standing up to his waist in the ocean at the time. No, not near the shore. Way out where a big enemy navy has massed its warships. Not only is Gulliver a giant in the land of Lilliput, but the sea

surrounding their land is apparently Lilliputian as well -- about 3 feet deep, I'd guess, judging by Jack Black's not towering stature.

As the film opens, Black is celebrating his 10th year in the mail room of a New York newspaper.

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